

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02109 01 OF 02 131727Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

ICAE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 IO-13 OMB-01

TRSE-00 SSM-03 /089 W

-----126370 131806Z /53

O R 131644Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7610

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2109

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MOPS PERP LE SY PLO

SUBJ: SHIAH-AYN AR-RUMMANEH INCIDENTS - WHAT HAPPENED?

1. SUMMARY. AS THIS IS BEING WRITTEN WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER CURRENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT WILL END SOON, BUT WOULD GUESS THAT CHANCES ARE SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN EVER THAT IT WILL. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF WHAT HAPPENED, AND WHY, AS BEST WE CAN TELL AT THIS POINT.

2. ORIGIN OF EPISODE ON APRIL 9 IS UNCLEAR BUT WAS PROBABLY A PERSONAL QUARREL WHICH QUICKLY DEVELOPED INTO FIREFIGHT BETWEEN CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH AND LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND/OR PALESTINIANS IN SHIAH. ON APRIL 11 SYRIAN ADF INTERVENED IN FORCE TO SEPARATE THE TWO SIDES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02109 01 OF 02 131727Z

AND FOUND THAT PALESTINIANS-LEFTISTS WERE COOPERATIVE BUT THAT CHRISTIANS RESISTED. ON APRIL 12 ADF POUNDED UNMERCIFULLY AYN AR-RUMMANEH, CAUSING DOZENS OF KILLED AND HUNDREDS OF WOUNDED ACCORDING TO PRESS. EVENING OF APRIL 12, SYRIANS INDICATED THEY WERE READY TO STEP BACK, AND FIGHTING TAPERED OFF, BUT RENEWED APRIL 13.

3. COMPARED TO FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS OF FEBRUARY, ORIGINS OF THIS ROUND WERE DIFFERENT SINCE SYRIANS WERE NOT INVOLVED AT OUTSET AND LEBANESE ARMY NOT AT ALL. PALESTINIANS MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED AT BEGINNING AS WELL. HOWEVER, DENOUEMENT AT THIS POINT SEEMS TO BE REMARKLY SIMILAR, WITH SYRIANS REACTING TO CHRISTIAN MILITIA RESISTANCE BY USE OF HEAVY TANK AND ARTILLERY FIRE. SOME CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAD CONVINCED THEMSELVES THAT FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS HAD DEALT A BLOW TO SYRIAN PREDOMINANCE IN BEIRUT; LATEST INCIDENTS MAY PROVE TO BE DEMONSTRATION THAT SYRIANS ARE DETERMINED TO STAY. END SUMMARY.

4. WHAT HAPPENED?

A. ON APRIL 9, THERE WAS SOME KIND OF AN INCIDENT IN THE AYN AR-RUMMANEH-SHIAH AREA. WE HAVE HEARD AT LEAST A DOZEN VERSIONS OF EXACTLY HOW IT ALL STARTED. IN ANY EVENT, FIRING QUICKLY DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE CHRWIMMANEH (PROBABLY BOTH PHALANGE AND NLP) AND ASSORTED LEFTISTS AND POSSIBLY PALESTINIANS IN SHIAH IN PATTERN REMINICENT OF 1975-76 CIVIL WAR. WEAPONS USED INCLUDED SMALL ARMS, MORTAR AND LPGS.

B. ON APRIL 10, ADF ISSUED ORDERS TO SHOOT-ON-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 02109 01 OF 02 131727Z

SIGHT ANY ARMED MEN IN THE AREA, BUT DID NOT REACT SERIOUSLY ITSELF. LEBANESE AUTHORITIES REQUESTED ADF TO DO SO. ATTACKS BY FIRE BETWEEN SHIAH AND AYN AR-RUMMANEH CONTINUED.

C. ON APRIL 11, ADF ENTERED AREA IN FORCE, WITH A TANK BATTALION. LEFTISTS AND/OR PALESTINIANS IN SHIAH DID NOT FIRE ON THE SYRIANS. CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH DID, BUT CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD NOT FIRED FIRST. (ONE CLAIM ADVANCED BY CHRISTIAN LEADERS IS THAT PALESTINIANS IN SHIAH FIRED SNIPER ROUNDS INTO AYN AR-RUMMANEH IN ORDER TO PROVOKE THE CHRISTIANS, WHO ASSUMED FIRE HAD COME FROM THE SYRIANS. WE DONT'T BELIEVE IT.)

D. ON APRIL 13 AT ABOUT 0300, THERE WAS SOME KIND OF INCIDENT IN HAZMIYAH AS A RESULT OF WHICH TWO SYRIAN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED. IN ADDITION, SMALL ARMS FIRE IN SHIAH-AYN AR-RUMMANEH AREA HAD CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT. DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS APRIL 12, SYRIANS EXTENDED THEIR POSITIONS IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH-SHIAH AREA AND INTO PART OF DADARO AREA. THEY HEAVILY ATTACKED

THESE RESIDENTIAL AREAS USING TANK AND ARTILLERY
FIRE, WHICH THEY CLAIMED WAS DIRECTED AGAINST SNIPER
POSITIONS, BUT WHICH CHRISTIANS CLAIMED WAS INDISCRIMINATE.
A PARTICULAR TARGET OF THE SYRIANS APPARENTLY WAS
LOCAL PHALANGE AND NLP OFFICES, AND THEY TOOK UP
POSITIONS NEAR PARTY OFFICES IN ASHRAFIYAH AS
WELL. DESPITE INTENSITY OF SYRIAN BOMBARDMENT,
FIGHTING DID NOT SPREAD, AND REST OF THE CITY, INCLUDING
EVEN MOST OF EAST BEIRUT, REMAINED RELATIVELY CALM.
EVENING OF APRIL 12, THE SYRIANS THROUGH SAMI KHATIB
ANNOUNCED STAND-DOWN, AND CALLED FOR CEASE-FIRE
CONFERENCE MORNING OF APRIL 13.

E. NIGHT OF APRIL 12-13 FIGHTING DID TAPER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 02109 01 OF 02 131727Z

OFF, BUT DID NOT STOP COMPLETELY, AND MORNING OF
APRIL 13 IT AGAIN INCREASED IN INTENSITY.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02109 02 OF 02 131744Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 IO-13 OMB-01
TRSE-00 SSM-03 /089 W
-----126700 131803Z /53

O R 131644Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7611
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 2109

5. QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN INVOLVEMENT. CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE CHARGING THAT WHOLE AFFAIR WAS DELIBERATE PALESTINIAN PROVOCATION WITH A VIEW TO ONCE AGAIN PREVENTING LEBANESE CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM RECONCILIATION, PARTICULARLY IN ANTICIPATION OF PARLIAMENTARY SESSION CONVENED FOR APRIL 20 TO DISCUSS PALESTINIAN QUESTION. IT IS POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO FIRM EVIDENCE, THAT SMALL GROUPS OR AT LEAST INDIVIDUAL PALESTINIANS WERE INVOLVED AT BEGINNING OF EPISODE ON APRIL 9. SHIYAH IS JUNGLE OF VARIOUS LEBANESE LEFTIST AND PALESTINIAN GROUPS. HOWEVER, PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP STOUTLY DENIES ITS INVOLVEMENT AND SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS ON THE GROUND TEND TO SUPPORT THEIR CLAIM. IT IS PRETTY CLEAR BY NOW THAT PALESTINIANS AND/OR LEFTISTS HAVE AVOIDED CONFRONTING THE SYRIANS. NEVERTHELESS, THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02109 02 OF 02 131744Z

POSSIBILITY REMAINS THAT PALESTINIANS DO PLAY A ROLE IN BEGINNING OF EPISODE.

6. LEBANESE FRONT ATTITUDES. LEBANESE FRONT SENIOR LEADERSHIP HAS TAKEN MORE BELLICOSE ATTITUDE THAN DURING FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS, BUT THEIR VENOM IS DIRECTED PRIMARILY AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. CAMILLE CHAMOUN ON APRIL 12 TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE FEARED THAT SITUATION WOULD GROW INTO GENERALIZED FIGHTING AND COULD LEAD DIRECTLY TO PARTITION OF THE COUNTRY. ROLES OF KEY LEBANESE FRONT MILITIA LEADERS BACHIR GEMAYEL AND DANY CHAMOUN HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO ROLES THEY PLAYED DURING FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS: BACHIR HAS BEEN CLAIMING HE HAS NOT BEEN PROVOKING FIGHTING, BUT HE HAS UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO PREVENT PHALANGE MILITIAMEN LOCALLY FROM TAKING POTSHOTS AT THE SYRIANS. DANY CHAMOUN, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS TAKEN INITIATIVE IN PARLEYING WITH THE SYRIANS AND WORKED HARD TO FIND LOCAL ACCOMMODATIONS. JUST AS DURING FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS, DANY IS PRIVATELY ACCUSING BACHIR GEMAYEL AND HIS BROTHER AMINE OF DELIBERATELY SEEKING TO PROVOKE THE FIGHTING THROUGH COMMANDO-STYLE ATTACKS ON THE SYRIANS.

7. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE HAS BEEN ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE.

8. SYRIAN ATTITUDE. WE HAVE SEEN NO STATEMENTS BY SYRIAN AUTHORITIES, EXCEPT THOSE THROUGH ADF "COMMANDER" KHATIB HERE IN BEIRUT. KHATIB IS DESCRIBING SYRIAN OPERATIONS AS STRICTLY WITHIN ADF PEACE-

KEEPING ROLE, AND HAS CLEARLY BLAMED CHRISTIAN
MILITIAS FOR NECESSITY OF ATTACKING AYN AR-RUMMANEH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 02109 02 OF 02 131744Z

WITH HEAVY FIRE.

9. SYRIAN STRATEGY. IN AFTERMATH OF FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS, SYRIANS HAD WITHDRAWN FROM NUMBER OF EXPOSED POSITIONS IN BEIRUT BUT REINFORCED OTHERS. IT APPEARED THAT THEY WERE REGROUPING IN ORDER TO CONFRONT POSSIBLE FUTURE INCIDENTS MORE EFFECTIVELY AND TO REDUCE THEIR OWN CASUALTIES. ONE SOURCE WELL CONNECTED WITH THE SYRIAN ESTABLISHMENT (KARIM PAKRADOUNI) HAD TOLD US THAT SYRIANS WERE PLANNING TO REACT IN MORE SURGICAL AND MORE EFFECTIVE MANNER TO FUTURE INCIDENTS, AND WERE DETERMINED TO AVOID GETTING INTO SITUATION OF GENERALIZED URBAN GUERRILLA WARFARE WITH THE MARONITES. A DAO SOURCE, HOWEVER, TOLD US THAT SYRIANS HAD DECIDED SOME TIME AGO TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF AYN AR-RUMMANEH, AND WERE JUST WAITING FOR A SUITABLE PRETEXT. IT IS CLEAR AT THIS POINT THAT SYRIANS REACTED IN LARGELY INDISCRIMINATE RATHER THAN SURGICAL MANNER; IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS WAS THEIR INTENT OR WHETHER THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO OTHERWISE APPROACH THE PROBLEM.

10. PROSPECTS. AT THIS POINT, IT IS OUR GUESS THAT SYRIANS FEEL THEY HAVE DONE ENOUGH DAMAGE AND ARE READY TO SMOKE THE PEACE-PIPE; BUT IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THERE IS SUFFICIENT CONSENSUS AND DISCIPLINE ON THE CHRISTIAN SIDE TO RECIPROCATATE APPROPRIATELY.
PARKER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT02109
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780159-0499
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780462/aaaacasp.tel
Line Count: 259
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: affe39b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2985901
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SHIAH-AYN AR-RUMMANEH INCIDENTS - WHAT HAPPENED?
TAGS: PINT, MOPS, PEPR, LE, SY, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/affe39b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014